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SHYLOCK.

His beard was red; his face was made
Not much unlike a witches.
His habit was a Jewish gown,
That would defend all weather;
His chin turned up, his nose hung down,
And both ends met together.

So Shylock was made up, according to the report of the old actor Thomas Jordan in 1664, on a stage that was still swayed by the tradition of Alleyn and Burbage. Macklin kept all of this—nose and chin enough he had of his own—when, in the forties of the eighteenth century, he restored to the stage "the Jew that Shakespeare drew," and he ventured a red hat in early Venetian style for the old "orange-tawney",[1] into the bargain. "By Jove! Shylock in a black wig!" exclaimed a first-rater as Kean, seventy years after, appeared in the wings of Drury Lane for his first performance. And the part was played by Sir Henry Irving, in our day, in a grey beard and a black cap. Changes in costume (on the stage at least) are but the outward and visible tokens of change. Macklin's grotesque ferocity gave place to Kean's vast and varied passion, and it, in turn, to Macready's and Irving's Hebraic picturesqueness and pathos. Taste had changed, and racial antipathy, in art if not in life, had faded away. Macklin, in an age when a part must be either comic or tragic, and not both together, dropped the butt and kept the villain, and this he played with such effect that the audience shrank visibly from him, and, during the play and after it, King George II lost sleep. Kean made the Jew an injured human being, an outraged father. And Macready and Irving lifted him, in the words of Edmund Booth, "out of the darkness of his na-

[1] Usurers should have orange-tawney Bonnets, because they doe Iudaize:—Bacon's Essay of Usury (Furness). See below, pp. 271f.

tive element of revengeful selfishness into the light of the venerable Hebrew, the martyr, the avenger."

With this movement criticism has kept pace, or has gone before. Macklin's conception is in sympathy with Rowe's; Kean's with Hazlitt's and Skottowe's; and Macready and Irving take the great company of the later critics with them in their notions of racial pathos, and, despite the declarations of a Spedding, a Furnivall, and a Furness,[2] in their plea for toleration. Few critics have recognized the prejudices of the times, the manifest indications of the poet's purpose, and his thoroughly Elizabethan taste for comic villainy. The few are mostly foreigners—Brandes, Brandl, Creizenach, Morsbach, and Sarcey. Others take account of this point of view only to gainsay it. "We breathed a sigh of relief", says the New York *Nation* (as if the worst were over) in a review of Professor Baker's book on Shakespeare, "when we found him confessing his belief that Shakespeare did not intend Shylock to be a comic character;"[3] and the distinguished critics Bradley and Raleigh may be supposed to have done the same. As much as fifteen years ago Professor Wendell expressed the opinion that Shylock was rightly represented on the stage in Shakespeare's time as a comic character, and rightly in our time as sympathetically human; but the dramatist's intention he left in the dark. Undertaking, perhaps, to abolish this antinomy and to bridge the gap between Shakespeare's time and ours, Professor Schelling perceives in Shylock, quite subtly, a grotesqueness bordering on laughter and a pathos bordering on tears.[4]

[2] See Furness's *Variorum Merchant of Venice*, pp. 433-5.

[3] August 15, 1907.

[4] Since this article was finished I have come upon the third volume of Mr. W. H. Hudson's *Elizabethan Shakespeare*, which contains the *Merchant of Venice*. In the introduction Mr. Hudson declares for historical criticism almost as unreservedly as heart could wish, and except for his silence concerning the comic aspects of Shylock, his interpretation of the character is in spirit almost identical with that presented in these pages.

The dramatist's intention—that, I must believe, is the only matter of importance. A work of art is not merely a point of departure for the mind which perceives it, like the preacher's text. It is not a sacred relic, a lover's token, a fetish, which conjures up more or less irrelevant spiritual and ecstatic states. Yet such it is ordinarily taken to be. "A work of art is what it is to us," wrote a distinguished man of letters not long since, "not what it was a hundred years ago, or two hundred years ago, or even to its author. His view of it does not concern us except as a scientific curiosity. Does it move us, does it help us, does it delight us here and now? If not, it has artistically no value." Certainly, as for the last; but the fact that it does move us, help us, and delight us, is not all that determines artistic value. If it were, many qualities and distinctions that are the substance of criticism, would fade away. The unique quality of a work of art, the thing which the impressionistic critic is supposed above all to seek and strive for,—wherein does it reside if not in the author's intention as cause, in our bosom as effect? And the critic who is unwilling to be delighted today with that at which others shall be offended tomorrow, will not disdain to look narrowly, in the light of history, to see whether his delight has a cause, or whether, proceeding only out of his own bosom, it is irrelevant and vain, It may very well be, as M. Anatole France insists, that critical truth, like other truth, is but what each man troweth; but metaphysics aside, we are all reasonably aware, in principle if not in practice, of the difference between getting an idea from an author and getting it from ourselves; and if the author is to say one thing, that his Shylock is a villain, having, according to his word, already made him such, and we are to take it that he says that Shylock is a martyr and an avenger, it matters little, it seems to me, who it is that is helping, moving and delighting us, Shakespeare or Kotzebue. Our passions and preconceptions overwhelm the poet. And he now is Dowden, Swinburne, Bradley, Raleigh, indeed, not himself. Yet who cares, or ever cared, to read the sonnets of Michelangelo's

brother's grandson? Given to the world for the poet's own, they were an adaptation to the taste of a later age. Scholarship, half a century ago, rescued the poet himself,[5] and the taste of the ages may adapt itself to him. Scholarship is all that can rescue Shakespeare.

To get at Shakespeare's intention is, after all, not hard. As with popular drama, great or small, he who runs may read—he who yawns and scuffles in the pit may understand. The time is past for speaking of Shakespeare as impartial or inscrutable; study of his work and that of his fellows as an expression of Elizabethan ideas and technique is teaching us better. The puzzle whether the *Merchant of Venice* is not meant for tragedy, for instance, clears up when, as Professor Baker suggests, we forget Sir Henry Irving's acting, and remember that the title,[6] and the hero, is not the "Jew of Venice" as he would lead us to suppose, that the play itself is, like such a comedy as *Measure for Measure* or *Much Ado*, not clear of the shadow of the fear of death, and that in closing with an act where Shylock and his knife are forgotten in the unraveling of the mystery between the lovers and the crowning of Antonio's happiness in theirs, it does not, from the Elizabethan point of view, perpetrate an anticlimax, but, like many another Elizabethan play, carries to completion what is a story for story's sake. "Shylock is, and has always been, the hero," says Professor Schelling. But why, then, does Shakespeare drop his hero out of the play for good before the fourth act is over? It is a trick which he never repeats—a trick, I am persuaded, of which he is not capable.

Hero or not, Shylock is given a villain's due. His is the heaviest penalty to be found in all the pound of flesh stories, including that in *Il Pecorone*, which served as a model for

[5] In the person of Guasti and others.—A fuller discussion of this point of view is to be found in my article *Anachronism in Shakespeare Criticism*, *Modern Philology*, April, 1910.

[6] No great weight, of course, can, with justice, be given to this circumstance, but it is significant that modern critics and translators object to the title as it stands.

this. Not in the Servian, the Persian, the African version, or even that of the *Cursor Mundi* does the money-lender suffer like Shylock—impoverishment, sentence of death, and an outrage done to his faith from which Jews were guarded even by decrees of German Emperors and Roman pontiffs. It was in the old play, perhaps, but that Shakespeare retained it shows his indifference to the amenities, to say the least, as regards either Jews or Judaism. Shylock's griefs excite no commiseration; indeed, as they press upon him they are barbed with gibes and jeers. The lot of Coriolanus is not dissimilar, but we know that the poet is with him. We know that the poet is not with Shylock, for on that head, in this play as in every other, the impartial, inscrutable poet leaves little or nothing to suggestion or surmise. As is his custom elsewhere, by the comments of the good characters, by the method pursued in the disposition of scenes, and by the downright avowals of soliloquy, he constantly sets us right.

As for the first of these artifices, all the characters who come in contact with Shylock except Tubal, among them being those of his own house—his servant and his daughter—have a word or two to say on the subject of his character, and never a good one. And in the same breath they spend on Bassanio and Antonio, his enemies, nothing but words of praise. Praise or blame, moreover, is, after Shakespeare's fashion, usually in the nick of time to guide the hearer's judgment. Lest the Jew should make too favorable an impression by his Scripture quotations, Antonio observes that the devil can cite Scripture for his purpose; lest the Jew's motive in foregoing interest, for once in his life, should seem like the kindness Antonio takes it to be, Bassanio avows that he likes not fair terms and a villain's mind; and once the Jew has caught the Christian on the hip, every one, from Gaoler to Duke, has words of horror for him and of compassion for his victim. As for the second artifice, the ordering of the scenes is such as to enforce this contrast. First impressions are momentous, every playwright knows (and no one better than Shakespeare him-

self), particularly for the purpose of ridicule. Launcelot and Jessica, in separate scenes, are introduced before Shylock reaches home, that, hearing their story, we may side with them, and, when the old curmudgeon appears, may be moved to laughter as he complains of Launcelot's gormandizing, sleeping, and rending apparel out, and as he is made game of by the young conspirators to his face. Still more conspicuous is this care when Shylock laments over his daughter and his ducats. Lest then by any means the tender-hearted should grieve, Salanio reports his outcries—in part word for word —two scenes in advance, as matter of mirth to himself and all the boys in Venice. And as for the third artifice, that a sleepy audience may not make the mistake of the cautious critic and take the villain for the hero, Shakespeare is at pains to label the villain by an aside at the moment the hero appears on the boards:

> I hate him for he is a Christian,
> But more for that in low simplicity
> He lends out money gratis, and brings down
> The rate of usance here with us in Venice.

Those are his motives, confessed repeatedly,[1] and either one brands him as a villain more unmistakably in that day, as we shall see, than in ours. Of the indignities which he has endured he speaks, too, and of revenge; but of none of these has he anything to say at the trial. There he pleads his oath, perjury to his soul should he break it, his "lodged hate", or his "humor"; but here to himself and to Tubal—"were he out of Venice I can make what merchandise I will" — he tells, in the thick of the action, the unvarnished truth. As with Shakespeare's villains generally, Aaron, Iago, or Richard III, only what they say concerning their purposes aside or to their confidants can be relied upon; and Shylock's oath, or his hor-

[1] *M. V.* 1. 3, 43f; III. 1, 55f, 133; III, 3, 2—the fool that lends out money gratis; line 22f:—I oft delivered from his forfeitures
Many that have at times made moan to me:
Therefore he hates me.

ror of perjury, is belied, as Dr. Furness[8] observes, by his clutching at thrice the principal when the pound of flesh escapes him, just as is his money-lender's ruse of borrowing the avowed cash from "a friend" (noted as such by Moses in the *School for Scandal*) by his going home "to purse the ducats straight." His arguments, too, are given a specious, not to say grotesque, coloring. Hazlitt and other critics[9] say that in argument Shylock has the best of it.

> What if my house be troubled with a rat
> And I be pleas'd to give *ten* thousand ducats
> To have it ban'd?

This rat is a human being, but the only thing to remark upon, in Shylock's opinion, is his willingness to squander ten thousand ducats on it. Even in Hazlitt's day, moreover, a choice of "carrion flesh" in preference to ducats could not be plausibly compared as a "humor" with an aversion to pigs or the bag-pipe, or defended as a right by the analogy of holding slaves;[10] nor could the practice of interest-taking find a warrant in Jacob's pastoral trickery while in the service of Laban; least of all in the day when Sir John Hawkins, who initiated the slave-trade with the Earls of Pembroke and Leicester and the Queen herself for partners, bore on the arms[11] which were granted him for his exploits a demi-Moor, proper, in chains, and in the day when the world at large still held interest-taking to be but theft. Very evidently, moreover, Shylock is discomfited by Antonio's question "Did he take interest?" for he falters and stumbles in his reply—

> No, not take interest, not, as you would say,
> Directly, interest,—

and is worsted, in the eyes of the audience if not in his own, by the use of the old Aristotelian argument of the essential

[8] *Variorum M. V.* p. 233.

[9] See, for instance, below, p. 299f.

[10] *M. V.* iv, I, 35—100.

[11] See Hawkins in the *Dictionary of National Biography.*

barrenness of money, still gospel in Shakespeare's day[12] in the second question,

Or is your gold and silver ewes and rams?

For his answer is meant for nothing better than a piece of complacent shamelessness:

I cannot tell: I make it breed as fast.

Only twice does Shakespeare seem to follow Shylock's pleadings and reasonings with any sympathy—"Hath a dog money?" in the first scene in which he appears, and "Hath not a Jew eyes?" in the third act—but a bit too much has been made of this. Either plea ends in such fashion as to alienate the audience. To Shylock's reproaches the admirable Antonio, "one of the gentlest and humblest of all the men in Shakespeare's theatre",[13] praised and honored by every one but Shylock, retorts, secure in his virtue, that he is just as like to spit on him and spurn him again. And Shylock's celebrated justification of his race runs headlong into a justification of his villainy:—"The villainy which you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction." "Hath not a Jew eyes?" and he proceeds to show that your Jew is no less than a man, and as such has a right, not to respect or compassion as the critics of a century have had it, but to revenge. Neither large nor lofty are his claims. Quite as vigorously and, in that day, with as much reason, the detestable and abominable Aaron defends his race and color, and Edmund, the dignity of bastards. The worst of his villains Shakespeare allows to plead their cause: their confidences in soliloquy, if not, as here, slight touches in the plea itself, sufficiently counteract any too favorable impression. This, on the face of it, is a plea for indulging in revenge with all its rigors; not a word is put in for the nobler side of Jewish character; and in lending Shy-

[12]See below, p. 286f.

[13]Cf. J. W. Hales, *English Historical Review* ix, p. 652 f. Cf. p. 660 for an accumulation of the evidence for his goodness and amiableness. "A kinder gentleman treads not the earth."

lock his eloquence Shakespeare is but giving the devil his due.[14]

By all the devices of Shakespeare's dramaturgy, then, Shylock is proclaimed, as by the triple repetition of a crier, to be the villain, a comic villain, though, or butt. Nor does the poet let pass any of the prejudices of that day which would heighten this impression. A miser, a money-lender, a Jew,—all three had from time immemorial been objects of popular detestation and ridicule, whether in life or on the stage. The union of them in one person is the rule in Shakespeare's day, both in plays and in "character"-writing: to the popular imagination a moneylender was a sordid miser with a hooked nose. So it is in the acknowledged prototype of Shylock, Marlowe's "bottle-nosed" monster, Barabas, the Jew of Malta. Though more of a villain, he has the same traits of craft and cruelty, the same unctuous friendliness hiding a thirst for a Christian's blood, the same thirst for blood outreaching his greed of gold, and the same spirit of unrelieved egoism which thrusts aside

[14] It is in these passages, no doubt, that, according to Mr. Hudson, (*v. ante* p. 262 n. 4), the racial feeling rises superior to Shylock's greed and personal ferocity and Shylock becomes an impressive, tragic figure. I dislike to disagree with a critic with whom I have found myself, unawares, so often agreeing, but I think that at this point Mr. Hudson has not quite shaken off the spell of the *Zeitgeist*, of which, as he himself confesses, it is hard to rid the mind. As I show below, p. 279, these appeals did not reach the hearts of the Elizabethans as they reach ours. Mr. Hudson explains them, like Professor Wendell, as moments where Shylock "got too much for Shakespeare", and said what he liked. But that dark saying I cannot comprehend—not in itself and still less on the lips of a critic who protests, so justly, against treating the characters of Shakespeare as if they were real people in a real world. What else are Mr. Hudson and Mr. Wendell doing when they let the poet be inspired by those whom he himself had inspired, and so say things in a spirit of racial sympathy beyond his ken? "Shylock spoke as Shylock would speak"—not Shakespeare —"spoke so simply because of the life which had been breathed into him." Granting that, Mr. Hudson surrenders all the ground he had gained for historical criticism. Shylock is thereupon free to say, regardless of his maker, whatever it enters into the head of the critic to have him say; and here is the entering in of the wedge for all those modernizing tendencies which Mr. Hudson, like a scholar, abhors.

the claims of his family, his nation, or even his faith. If Barabas fawns like a spaniel when he pleases, grins when he bites, heaves up his shoulders when they call him dog, Shylock, for his part, "still bears it with a patient shrug," and "grows kind", seeking the Christian's "love" in the hypocritical fashion of Barabas with the suitors and the friars. If Barabas ignores the interests of his brother Jews, poisons his daughter, "counts religion but a childish toy", and, in various forms, avows the wish that "so I live perish may all the world," Shylock has no word for the generous soul but "fool" and "simpleton",[15] and cries, "fervid patriot" that he is, "martyr and avenger": "A diamond gone, cost me two thousand ducats in Frankfort! The curse never fell upon our nation until now. I never felt it till now." Such is his love of his race, which Professor Raleigh says is "deep as life."[16] And in the next breath he cries, "the affectionate father": "Two thousand ducats in that; and other precious, precious jewels. I would my daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear . . . and the ducats in her coffin." This alternation of daughter and ducats itself comes from Marlowe's play, as well as other ludicrous touches, such as your Jew's stinginess with food and horror of swine-eating, and the confounding of Jew and devil. This last is an old, wide-spread superstition: on the strength of holy writ the Fathers, with the suffrage in late years of Luther, held that the Jews were devils and the synagogue the house of Satan.[17] In both plays it affords the standing joke, in the

[15] Cf. III, 3, where the word, as Cowden-Clark remarks, is significant. "This is the fool that lent out money gratis;"—"in low simplicity he lends out money gratis."

[16] *Shakespeare*, p. 150.

[17] See *Jewish Encyclopaedia*, article *Church Fathers*. Prynne in his *Short Demurrer*, (1656, Pt. i, p. 35) quotes Matthew Paris, and (p. 7) Eadmerus, in passages where the Jew is identified with the devil. Other evidence I shall present shortly in a special article. In the cases cited here and below, *devil* is not used loosely as the equivalent of *villain*. Shylock is a devil because he is a Jew.

Merchant of Venice nine times repeated.[18] "Let me say Amen betimes", exclaims Salanio in the midst of his good wishes for Antonio, "lest the devil cross my prayer, for here he comes in the likeness of a Jew". And in keeping with these notions Shylock's synagogue is, as Luther devoutly calls it, *ein Teufels Nest,* the nest for hatching his plot once he and Tubal and the others of his "tribe" can get together. "Go, go, Tubal", he cries in the unction of his guile, "and meet me at our synagogue; go, good Tubal, at our synagogue, Tubal!"[19] It is highly probable, moreover, that Shylock wore the red hair and beard, mentioned by Jordan, from the beginning, as well as the bottle-nose of Barabas. So Judas was made up from of old, and in their immemorial orange-tawny, highcrowned hats, and "Jewish gaberdines", the very looks of the two usurers welcomed horror and derision. In both plays the word Jew, itself a badge of opprobrium, is constantly in use instead of the proper name in question and as a byword for cruelty and cunning.

In other Elizabethan plays the Jew fares still worse. Few instances have come down to us, but in Abyssus in the anonymous *Timon,* Mammon in *Jack Drum's Entertainment,* Pisaro in Haughton's *Englishmen for My Money,* and Zariph in Day's *Travels of Three English Gentlemen* are to be found, in various combinations, usurer and miser, villain and butt, devourer of Christian blood and coin, and limb of the devil,[20] all big-

[18]Bartlett's Concordance, *Jew.*

[19]There is a medieval picture of such a meeting to be found in Lacroix, t. i., *fol.* viii, *Conspiration des Juifs,* a miniature in *Le Pélerinage de la vie humaine.* How they lay their heads together! For the unrealistic red hair and beard put upon the Jews in medieval literature and art there is a deal of evidence, some of which I hope soon to publish.

[20]*Jack Drum,* II, 53; II, 90, etc.

nosed,[21] or foul-breathed, in accordance with the vulgar error,[22]— in some fashion or other egregiously Jewy. In Mammon and Zariph, who are manifestly done under the influence of Shylock, prominence is given to outcries of avarice and of gloating revenge; and in Pisaro and Abyssus it is the nose, enormous and fiery, that bears the brunt. All these figures, the monstrous births of feeble poets, which owe all the humanity they have to Barabas and Shylock, are nevertheless of the same class, show the same traits, an exaggeration of the same comic spirit. If they are travesties, they are such unconsciously, inevitably.

In two other plays, which certainly antedate the *Merchant of Venice,* and probably the *Jew of Malta*—Wilson's *Three Ladies of London* (1583) and the anonymous *Selimus* (1588)— the Jew has not developed so many traits. In the former play there is the single instance in the Elizabethan drama of an honorable Jew, one who forgives Mercatore a debt rather than let him go the length of adjuring his faith and turning Turk to escape it. But this episode is one with a purpose, that of satirizing the foreign merchants who are ruining England; and the Jews are painted fair only to blacken these. Gerontus is not held up to admiration as a whole, for his lending at interest is a practice bitterly attacked in this very play;[23] intent as he is on recovering interest and principal, he serves admirably as a foil to a love of lucre that knows no bounds. That Wilson is no advocate of the race appears from his crediting to Usury, in his next play, *The Three Lords and*

[21]*Ibid.* pp. 140, 142, 143, etc; *Englishmen for my Money,* Hazlitt's Dodsley, x, pp. 481, 522: *Timon,* Hazlitt's *Shakespeare's Library,* pt. ii, vol. 2, pp. 396—7. In neither of the last named plays is the usurer expressly stated to be a Jew.

[22]Much is made of this in *Timon.* See below, p. 283.

[23]Dodsley, vol. vi, p. 332. Usury, robbing Love and Conscience of their house, sets them on the downward path; and he assassinates Hospitality.

Ladies of London, purely Jewish parentage.[24] In the character of the usurer in Butler's and Overbury's collections and in Rowley's Search for Money[25] (1607), however, the usual conception prevails—that of one who lends money at interest, hoards it, skimps both himself and his dependents, and is an egoist and an atheist without conscience or virtue. Butler and Overbury do not call him a Jew, but Rowley is sufficiently explicit in giving him a nose like the "Jew of Maltae's", a foul odor, and Satan for patron. And the collections of medieval *exempla*[26] abound in stories of usurers who are fonder of gold than of their own souls and for it have given them up to the devil.

In the English mysteries which have come down to us few traces are now to be found of a ludicrous treatment of the Jew. Like much of the other comic matter, it may have been such as does not appear in the dialogue—improvisations, gestures, noses, orange-tawny hats. Judas, with his red hair, red beard, and beetling brows was no doubt comical, for these features the later drama never forgot, and there is a farcical scene in the York Plays where Pilate's Porter refuses him admittance at sight. Medieval mysteries are everywhere, however, much the same, and the omission may be supplied. By the Germans, who, unlike the English after 1290, had the Jews always with them, they are made ridiculous, like the devils. Their looks, dress, speech and proverbial greed are not spared, and the Jews' Song in double dutch is the standing-dish at the feast of fun. This blunt and boisterous satire, goes the length, still attested pictorially, of representing them as drinking wine or beer as it gushes from a sow or a calf.[27] In

[24]Dodsley, vi, p. 457—Cf. Dr. Fernow's Programm, Hamburg, 1885, to which I am here indebted.

[25]Percy Society, ii, p. 20.

[26]Those of Jacques de Vitry, for instance; ed. by T. F. Crane. *v.* index.

[27]*V.* Flögel-Ebeling, Geschichte des Grotesk-Komischen, Tafel 20; Creizenach.

the Carnival plays, the newly converted are in a state of eager expectancy of the forbidden sausage; and once Hans Sachs delighted his audience by letting the devil, driven out of his patient by a physician, enter into a pair of Jewish usurers.[28] The Italian *Carri,* popular plays presented on wagons drawn by oxen at Carnival through the streets of Rome, were also called *Giudate,* because in them the Jews played the main part — were abused and mocked, and, in the end, hanged, choked, impaled, and burned.[29] And like derision they met at the hands of the Spanish.[30]

In the Elizabethan drama and character-writing, then, the Jew is both money-lender and miser, a villain who hankers after the Christians' blood, a gross egoist, even an atheist, though charged with dealings with the devil, and at the same time a butt, a hook-nosed niggard. A similar spirit of rude caricature and boisterous burlesque, with even less of characterization, prevails in the treatment of the Jews in early popular drama on the Continent. Such is the soil from which the figure of Shylock grew. For everything in Shakespeare is a growth, and strikes root deep in the present and the past, in stage tradition and in human life. The tradition having been examined, it now remains only to examine the opinions, or antipathies, of the time.

Critics have wondered at the knowledge of Jewish character displayed by Shakespeare, but Mr. Sidney Lee some years ago[31] showed that although banished from England in 1290,

[28]For the German plays, *v.* Creizenach i, pp. 205, 305, 419.

[29]Klein, *Geschichte des Dramas,* iv, 229—40.

[30]Creizenach, iii, 189—207.

[31]*Gentleman's Magazine,* 1880, p. 187 f. *Academy,* May 14, 1887. *Transactions of New Shakespeare Society,* 1888. Commonly they followed the trade of old clothes dealer, as appears from a passage quoted by Mr. Lee from Every Woman in her Humor (1609) and from Rowley's *Search for Money,* p. 15, as now and in the days of St. Jerome. Creizenach quotes Heywood's *Challenge for Beauty* (1635) on their character: "Your English Jewes, they'le buy and sell their fathers, prostrate their wives, and make money of their own children, the male stewes can witnesse that." (*Works,* vol. v. p. 26.)

and not admitted until the latter days of Cromwell, Jews were then not unknown. "Store of Jewes we have in England," to quote *The Wandering Jew Telling Fortunes to Englishmen* (1640); "a few in Court, many in the Citty, more in the Countrey." In 1594, a couple of years before the *Merchant of Venice* was written, one of these Jews at court made something of a stir. Lopez, the Queen's physician, was tried for conspiracy against her life. Mr. Lee[32] has shown the bitterness of feeling which it provoked, and the weight that was given to the fact that the offender was a Jew by prosecutor, judges, and people. "The perjured and murderous Jewish doctor," cried Coke, "is worse than Judas himself," and of a religious profession, he said again, "fit for any execrable undertaking." Even his judges spoke of him as "that vile Jew." Though no longer a Jew by faith, when he protested from the scaffold that "he loved the Queene as he loved Jesus Christ," such words "from a man of the Jewish profession", says Camden, were "heard not without laughter;" and "He is a Jew!" men cried aloud as the breath passed from his body.[33] "And what's his reason?" asks Shylock in the play. "I am a Jew!"

Of itself this incident is enough to show that although there was no Jewish peril in Shakespeare's day, the race-hatred of Angevin days had not burned out. Even the Reformation, in England as in Germany, had done little to quench it.[34] Only the later Puritans felt any relentings toward the chosen race. Hebrews of the Hebrews themselves, it was little wonder. The visionaries, the Fifth Monarchy men, the Root-and-Branch men often looked kindly upon the Jews as they made the Jewish Sabbath henceforth the British Sabbath, contemplated surrounding Cromwell with a Sanhedrim of seventy councillors, and urged on Parliament the establishing of the Torah as

[32] *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1880, p. 194f.

[33] *Annales* (ed. 1635) p. 431. All the evidence used in the paragraph is Mr. Lee's.

[34] Graetz (iv. pp. 540—2.)

the law of the realm.[35] But the nation as a whole was not so minded. With it race-hatred went deeper than religion. Cromwell admitted the Jews in 1655, but it had to be by the back door, as Graetz remarks, for the Commission which he designated to sit upon the measure had to be admonished and dissolved like Parliament itself. Prynne, who for his own faith had lost his ears, wrote what was, measured by the standard of the time, a *Short Demurrer,* in Two Parts, in which, like Luther a century before him, he raked up all the charges that had ever been made against the Jews, including usury, coining, cheating and oppression, crucifixion of children, blasphemy and sacrilege, malice toward man and God, the murder of Christ, obstinacy and hardness of heart. "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?" he cries, with none to contradict him, in his zeal; "I hate them with a perfect hatred." And others there were like him, as appears from the petition to Parliament of Robert Rich, surnamed Mordecai, in 1653, on behalf of the Jews in England, Scotland and Ireland: "Ever since 1648, it was hoped that persecution for conscience' sake would cease and truth and mercy take its place, but contrary thereto, these three last years hundreds in England have been cast into dungeons and prisons, some have perished, and others endured whippings, stonings and spoilings of goods for matters concerning their law and conscience," etc.[36] Even after these persecutions had, under Cromwell's iron hand, been allayed, and the Jews admitted to rights of worship, it was upon a precarious basis. The doors of the first synagogue were threefold and double-locked. In 1660, a remonstrance upon their usurious and fraudulent practices was made by the Lord Mayor and Aldermen to the King, praying for imposition on them of special taxes, seizure of their personal property, and banishment for residence without a license.[37]

[35]Cf. Graetz, v, 28.

[36]*Calendar of State Papers, Domestic,* 1653, p. 331.

[37]*Ibid.,* 1660—1, p. 366.

Even after the Revolution, in 1689, a bill specially to tax the Jews was introduced into Parliament.

Such were the disabilities under which the Jews labored for a century after Shakespeare's day. What is the recorded opinion of his contemporaries? Coke, Solicitor-General, is comprehensible in abusing Lopez, but he is hardly so as, no longer Solicitor but a jurist, ex-Chief Justice of the King's Bench, he abuses the Jews in his *Institutes of the Laws of England.* "Odious", he calls them in his commentary on the Statute De Judaismo, "both to God and man;"—"these cruel Jews, wicked and wretched men."[38] Bishop Joseph Hall, writing to Samuel Burton, Archdeacon of Gloucester, in 1607, rejoices that "our church is well rid of that accursed nation, whom yet Rome harbours while instead of spitting at, or that their Neapolitan correction whereof Gratian speaks, the pope solemnly receives at their hands that Bible which they at once approve and overthrow." " The subtlest and most subdolous People," writes James Howell in 1633 to Lord Clifford, "the most hateful race of men". Jeremy Taylor thinks it is a wonder how the anger of God is gone out upon that miserable people.[39] And Robert South, the greatest preacher in England a century after Shakespeare's death, declares, in a long and virulent passage, that it was appointed as the bitterest humiliation of Christ's life on earth that he should be born of the race of the Jews, "the most sordid and degenerate upon the earth." "And to this very day," he continues, "how much are they disgusted in all those kingdoms and dominions where they are dispersed! They are like dung upon the face of the earth; and that not so much for their being scattered as for being so offensive."[40]

Nor is it a legal or theological prejudice merely. Popular literature, as the drama, is imbued with it, as we have already

[38] *Second Institute,* pp. 506 ff, where there is more of this.

[39] Of the Probable Conscience, Bk. i. ch. 4, § 28.

[40] *Sermons* (London, 1865), vol. 2, p. 228.

seen, and dozens of ballads, like *Hugh of Lincoln* and *Gernutus*, still handed it down orally from generation to generation. Enlightenment prevailed not against it. Many people think Shakespeare too free a spirit to have entertained it, but the freest spirit of Shakespeare's day, who, in a short life, cast from him more hearsays and superstitions than any Englishman up to the time of Hobbes, clings to this. With not a thought of their damnation or of the wrath of God upon them, Giordano Bruno yet calls the Jews a generation so "pestilente, leprosa, et generalmente perniciosa; che merita prima esser spinta, che nata;—gente sempre vile, seruile, mercenaria, solitaria, incommunicabile, et inconuersabile con l'altre generationi, le quali bestialmente spregiano, et da le quali per ogni ragione son degnamente dispreggiate."[41] Here is a limit at the real cause of Jew-baiting the world over—the ways and manners of the Jews, their *mores* as Professor Sumner says, those traits and customs which keep them to this day a nation, though of exiles. History is in accord with this. The ancients—Greeks, Romans, Syrians, and Egyptians—hated them, and at times persecuted them, with no pious scruple to justify it, almost as heartily as the medieval Christians.[42] The frightful persecutions, the Jew-burnings, which in times of great emotional exaltation or depression raged through Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, were almost always popular movements, not instigated or directed by the church; and princes, kings, emperors, popes like Clement VI, fanatics like Saint Bernard, the Dominicans and the Franciscans time and again had to intervene between the Jews and the

[41] *Spaccio della bestia*, ed. Largarde, p. 500; *Cabala del cavallo Pegaseo*, p. 576.

[42] *v. Jewish Encyclopaedia, Diaspora*, for an account of the horrible massacres and manifold persecutions at Seleucia and Alexandria, in Syria and Mesopotamia; and for the almost universally unfavorable opinion of them held by the ancient writers. Cf. Graetz, ii, pp. 178—9; Mommsen (N. Y. 1871), iv, p. 642; South, *Sermons*, ii, p. 288.

violence of the mob.[43] Converts fared little better than the faithful.[44] And it was not the priest-ridden countries but those which first attained to a consciousness of national unity—England, France, Spain—as Wellhausen has shown, that expelled the Jews from their borders. In Italy, hard by the papal throne, they enjoyed greater security. In England, in the twentieth year of Henry III, the inhabitants of Southampton petitioned the king for a like privilege with the men of Newcastle, that no Jew should dwell among them,[45] and Parliament granted Edward I a fifteenth[46] in return for the favor of expelling the people as a whole. If, then, the hatred of Jews is at bottom a racial and social, not a religious, prejudice, and not Protestantism, not even the free thought or the Renaissance, but only Puritan fanaticism, late in the seventeenth century, availed, in any measure, to dispel it, why should we refuse to recognize it in Shakespeare, who, more than any other poet, reflected the settled prejudices and passions of his race?

Consider the medieval sentiment of the comedy, for to the Middle Ages, in the dearth of Jews and contemporary references to Jews in Elizabethan England, we must turn for illustration. It matters little, for scholars are more and more recognizing that, so far as manners, morals, and human relations are concerned, the difference between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, particularly the English Renaissance, is not great. Most readers and critics nowadays resent the despoiling of Shylock at the end. Indeed, where is there another instance of a villain in a Shakespearean comedy, with such cause for his villainy, coming off so ill? But even a century later,

[43]Larcroix, *Moyen Age et Renaissance*, t. i, *Juifs*, fol. 5; Green's *History*, i, p. 338; Graetz, passim, from whom a long list of rulers might be made.

[44]Lacroix, *ibid.* fol. 16, for the religious persecution of converts in France and Portugal in the sixteenth century.

[45]Tovey, *Anglia Judaica, Oxford*, 1738, p. 105.

[46]Green i, p. 340; *Annales De Dunstaplia* (Rolls Series), p. 362.

as we have seen, a sense of justice did not keep the government from the consideration of measures of confiscation and special taxation, and all the European history of the Jewish race for a thousand years before is made up of such measures put, without consideration, into effect. In the days of Titus, and afterwards in every nation and principality of Europe, they were *servi camerae,* and, in return for the slight protection they received, they were pillaged and plundered, legally or illegally. Every feudatory-in-chief spoke of his Jews as of his serfs or his hounds,[47] and he sold them, or bought them, or mortgaged them, or, like William Rufus, waxed furious in defense of them, as his needs required.[48] The king took possession of all the real property of which a Jew was seized, in case of his "death, outlary, or departure hence"[49] (or, in some parts of Europe, as soon, apparently, as he was known to have purchased it), and in defiance of the fourth Lateran Council, of all property whatsoever, as the fruits of usury, on his conversion.[50] "Judaeus vero nihil proprium habere potest", says Bracton (and the principle prevailed far beyond the Channel), "quia quidquid acquirit non sibi acquirit sed regi, quia non vivunt sibi ipsis sed aliis, et sic aliis acquirunt et non sibi ipsis."[51] "They are doomed to perpetual servitude," writes

[47]Lacroix, *op. cit.* fol. 8.

[48]Du Cange, *sub voc. Judaei; Tovey.* Matthew Paris (Du Cange) makes a medieval jest of it when Henry III mortgages the Jews to Earl Richard, his brother, *ut quos Rex excoriaverat Comes evisceraret.* The poor Jews came back within a year or two into his hands, to be made over by deed to Prince Edward and by him assigned for two years to the Cahorsins! Cf. *Lettres par les quelles le Roi donne un Juif a son frère—achète un Juif. Recueil des lois francaises,* ii, p. 709.

[49]Prynne, *Demurrer,* Pt. ii. p. 39, citing a preamble of a writ of 34 Henry III. Cf. Du Cange.

[50]Hyamson, *Jews in England,* p. 25; Du Cange, etc.

[51]*De Warrantia,* cap. vi. To the same effect, the *Leges Anglicanae.* Hoveden (Rolls Series) ii., p. 231. *Leges Edwardi Confessoris* (earlier version, c. twelfth century) cap. 25. *Du Cange, Judaei.*

Saint Thomas Aquinas, "and the lords of the earth may use their goods as their own."[52] "The curse of the Patriarch rests upon the descendents of Ham," declared in 1851 the Supreme Court of Georgia, with reference to another subject race; "the negro and his master are but fulfilling a divine appointment."[53] A medieval sentiment, but alive in Shakespeare's day and not extinct in ours.

Nor were men content with injustice that was legal. Not for their own behoof did the Jews live, as Bracton puts it, nor merely for the king's, but also for that of the people at large. Philip Augustus in 1182 remitted to every man his debts to the Jews on payment of a fifth part into the royal treasury.[54] Saint Louis remitted a third part of all such debts for the salvation of his own soul and the souls of his ancestors; "et quia pacem operatur justicia," continues the chronicler, naive in morals as in grammar, "dedit Deus sibi pacem et regno tranquillitatem."[55] And there is an edict of Henry III in the year 1266, recorded in the *Red Book of the Exchequer,* to annul the debts of Christians to Jews in toto, as well as many special orders, in the reign of John particularly, annulling the debts of individuals.[56] At the last, when the Jews were banished from England, they were deprived of all their landed property at one blow; and as late as 1542 the great leader of the Reformation proposed to the princes and people of Germany, in his sorry pamphlet *Von den Juden und ihren Lügen,* that their synagogues and houses should be burned or destroyed, and they themselves deprived of all their wealth, their books and their

[52]Van Bruyssel, *Histoire de commerce belge,* i, p. 239, letter to Alice of Burgundy. (Lecky)

[53]Neal vs. Farmer, Georgia Reports, 1851, p. 582.

[54]*Recueil des lois,* i, p. 170.

[55]Hallam, *Middle Ages* (N. Y. 1854) ii, p. 484.—*Beati Ludovici Vita, Recueil des historiens des Gaules,* t. 23, p. 164.

[56]*Red Book* (Rolls Series) p. 978: Ke totes les dettes a Gyus seent quites a Crestiens ke les deyvent et a lur eyres a tuz jurs.—Madox, *History of Exchequer,* p. 157. (Larcroix)

prayer-books, and put to work with spade or spindle.[57] With such treatment of the race lingering in men's memories, it is small wonder that Jessica, as she runs away with the Christian, should, to the satisfaction of everybody on the stage or off it, carry her father's ducats and jewels with her, and that the Duke, in the simplicity of his soul, should think it a virtue and a mercy to spare the life of the outraged Jew at the cost of all his goods. "Thou shalt see the difference of our spirits," Shakespeare lets him say, in perfect good faith.[58]

Enforced conversion, or rather conversion suborned, a feature as we have seen, not to be found in other pound of flesh stories, and to be attributed to Gosson's old play[59] or to the *Jew of Malta,* is another matter which shocks us. It need not do so: it is a better way than the ways of Whitgift, Bancroft, and Laud. Even so late as 1635 there is a case recorded as before the High Court of Commission, of one Mary Chester, a Jewess, prisoner in Bridewell, who was 'enlarged' upon acknowledgment and recantation of her errors in holding certain Judaical tenets touching the Sabbath and distinction of meats, after putting in bond to appear.[60] Coercion of unbelievers was an immemorial practice, not, in Shakespeare's day, by any means discredited, and never condemned by Shakespeare himself. "Personal religion", "convictions" were terms not then current, and according to the rough-and-ready manners of the time, Antonio's mercenary stipulation—not much more so, by the way, than that with which nowadays a Catholic king offers his hand and crown to a Protestant princess—is of course to be reckoned as an exemplary kindness, or, as Portia calls it, a mercy rendered him. "Provided that for this favor he presently be-

[57] *Werke* (Altenburg, 1662) Theil viii, p. 260.

[58] IV, 1, 368.

[59] The lost play representing "the greediness of worldly chusers, and bloody mindes of Usurers," mentioned by Gosson in his *School of Abuse.* (1579). In the *Jew of Malta,* 1, 2, the Jews are given the alternative of losing their property or becoming Christians.

[60] *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic,* 1635—6, p. 132.

come a Christian"! The idea is old-fashioned, like the Duke's notion of clemency to the Jews, or Saint Louis's expedient for making his own and his ancestors' salvation sure, but nothing could be farther from Shakespeare's thought than Professor Jastrow's suggestion of satire or irony.[61]

Once Launcelot rallies Jessica on the subject of Jewish damnation, and Doctor Brandes[62] thinks it proof that Shakespeare does not entertain that belief. But it is jesting pure and simple, without touch of satire, and although such jesting would hardly be expected, say of a Puritan or of a Methodist, one who takes his religion or others' much to heart, it might easily be expected of Shakespeare. Hell and damnation in general are a favorite subject of mirth with him—witness the Porter scene in *Macbeth*—as with the world before and since; and he would hardly have pulled a long face when the joke touched the Jews. The damnation of the Jews was a doctrine of the Fathers, never doubted, daily, idiomatically reaffirmed; and it was warrant for endless insult and discrimination. In the Middle Ages and after they were treated as a thing unclean. Their blood, it was thought, was black and putrid; the stench, a notion prevalent in England as late as the middle of the eighteenth century, came, not, as might have been expected, from the devil who possessed them, but as a curse from Christ.[63] They were forbidden to touch at market food which they did not buy, and to consort with Christians at the alehouse, the bath, or one another's houses;[64] and they were barred

[61]Mr. W. H. Hudson (*op. cit.* xliv) takes notice with just scorn, of an equally remarkable opinion to the effect that Shylock had been brought to realize that, in insisting upon his conversion to Christianity, Antonio was acting only for his good. For this, as for irony, there is no jot or tittle of evidence. But evidence, it seems, your true-blue Shakespearean does not seek—he is engaged in exploring his own consciousness.

[62]*William Shakespeare* (London, 1909) pp. 165—6.

[63]Browne, *Pseudodoxia,* bk. iv, ch. 10, Tovey, *Anglia Judaica* (1738) p. 95.

[64]Ducange, *Judaei;* Lecky.

from the church and the brothel.[65] Intermarriage with them was an abomination, and in the reign of St. Louis a Christian who kept a Jewish concubine was burned. Because of their unholy influences they were forbidden to hold Christian slaves, and for the strangest of reasons, to hire Christian nurses.[66] They were assigned a special dwelling-place, cemetery, and daily garb, and, by decree of œcumenical councils, the Jew-badge and the high-crowned yellow hat, or *pileus cornutus*. Provoked by these distinctions there arose a world of insult and savage jest. At Toulouse in Holy Week a Jew was compelled to stand at the cathedral door to receive buffets from the worshipers as they came in and out. At Béziers the populace stoned Jewish houses. The tariff of tolls at bridges and turnpikes in France distinguished between Christians and Jews, Jews and Jewesses, and Jewesses fat and lean, and put them all on a level with cattle; and in the same country until the fourteenth century, when a Jew was hanged, it was head downwards between two dogs.[67] The race between Jews and horses at the Roman Carnival was, we may be sure, the hughest jest offered the rabble in the year, and the Jews paid the magistrates three hundred scudi annually to be rid of it. It was in the atmosphere of such abhorrence and inhuman contempt and ridicule that Antonio learned to call Shylock devil, misbeliever and cutthroat dog, to kick him and spit upon his beard and Jewish gaberdine. In 1381, according to a letter in the royal archives, cited by Du Cange, a certain Jehan La Barbe, 'having been spit upon in the face, was moved to wrath at the outrage, seeing that he was no Jew, in whose face it behooves one to spit'.[68] Such a method, we have

[65]By the Council of Oxford, 1222; Lecky, *History of Rationalism*, (N. Y. 1875), ii, p. 265.

[66]Tovey, 103-105, letter of Innocent III to the Archbishop of Sens and proclamation of Henry III of England. The reason given is the impiety of the Jews in forcing the nurses to milk themselves into a privy for three days after taking the Sacrament.

[67]Lecky, quoting Michelet, *Origines du Droit*, p. 368. Lacroix, *Moyen Age, Juifs*, fol. IX.

[68]*Sub. voc. Judaei*: à qui on deust cracher au visage.

seen, Bishop Hall would recommend to the Pope for receiving the Jews when they came to him with the Bible: and certainly it had already something of hieratic sanction, for in the Eastern Church spitting at the devil was part of the ritual of baptism.[69] That the Jew was a devil, we remember, was a matter of common belief and pleasantry. Nor was the Jew, in medieval imagination at least, to be outdone, for according to Luther, who in his diatribe has all too much to say of spitting, metaphorically or literally, a threefold expectoration accompanied the Jewish curse of Christ.[70]

Here we touch on one of the charges against the Jews which lie embedded in Shakespeare's other work, among the few casual references which he makes to them. "Liver of blaspheming Jew" is cast into the cauldron by the Witches in *Macbeth,* along with other unholy odds and ends:—

> Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips,
> Finger of birth-strangled babe
> Ditch-deliver'd by a drab.

Blasphemy is a charge made from the time of the Fathers.[71] Three times daily the Jews were supposed to rail against Christ in their prayers. That they should be restrained from such blasphemy was a special recommendation of the committee appointed by the Council in 1655 to consider the re-settlement of the Jews in England.[72] In that day when a man had to look out for his God as well as for himself, Luther took this matter of blasphemy particularly hard. Again and again in his tractate he belabors the Jews for it; and he would have their synagogues and their houses, as the scenes of such impiety, burned down and removed forever from the sight of man. "Und solchs sol man thun unserm Herrn und der Christenheit zu Ehren,

[69]Roskoff, *Geschichte des Teufels,* i, p. 291.

[70]*Op. cit.* p. 254.

[71]Justin, Origen, Epiphanius, Jerome. *V. Jewish Encyclopaedia,* article *Church Fathers.*

[72]Hyamson, *Jews in England,* p. 205.

damit Gott sehe dass wir Christen seyn!" Hardness of heart is another implied accusation, several times repeated. "A Jew would have wept," sobs Launce, before his cruel-hearted cur, "to have seen our parting." Shylock himself is intended as a capital instance: the Duke, Antonio, Bassanio and Gratiano all recognize in him the "Jewish heart", "uncapable of pity"—"than which what's harder?"—and it is this that gave point, now lost, to Portia's praise of mercy. People generally—Protestants like Luther and Prynne, for instance—believed, as in some parts of Europe they believe still, that the Jews, especially about the time of the Passover, caught little Christians and crucified them, poisoned the wells or the air, and dealt death and destruction about them as freely as Barabas in the play.[73] After all this, one other charge, no more than vaguely hinted at in Shakespeare but made explicit, as we have seen, in Marlowe, that of atheism, need not surprise us. Absurd as it is, it comes down from ancient times, and it is no more absurd than Luther's charge of blasphemy and idolatry,[74] made a few years before Marlowe wrote.

Shylock, we do not forget, was also a usurer. Dr. Honigmann, who is of those who interpret the *Merchant of Venice* as a plea for toleration, says that in Shakespeare's day the word did not carry with it any stigma.[75] Never was opinion more mistaken. By laws civil and ecclesiastical, usury—that is, the exaction of interest of any sort—was a crime. With expanding trade and manufacture the practice was widening, but no one approved of it in principle. By 37 Henry VIII, cap. ix, the old laws against usury are, indeed, abolished, and a rate of ten per cent is indirectly legalized by the fixing of severe penalties for any rate higher; but the practice is condemned and classed with corrupt bargains, and the reason given for the present enactment is that the old "Actes bene of so little force and effect

[73] See Graetz passim; or any history of the Middle Ages.

[74] *Von den Juden und ihren Lügen.*

[75] *Jahrbuch*, xviii, p. 216.

that by reason thereof litle or noe punyshment hath ensued to the offendors of the same". In 1552, however, by 6 Edward VI, cap. xx, the act of Henry VIII is annulled, though "not ment or intended for mayntenance and allowaunce of Usurie, as dyvers parsons[76] blynded with inordinat love of themselves have and yet doo mistake the same"; and severe penalties are enacted against any usury whatever, "forasmuch as Usurie is by the worde of God utterly prohibited, as a vyce most odyous and detestable, as in dyvers places in the hollie Scriptures it is evydent to be seen, which thing by no godly teachings and perswations can syncke in to the harte of dyvers gredie, uncharitable and couvetous parsons of this Realme, nor yet by anny terrible threatenings of Godd's wrathe and vengeaunce," etc. In 1570 by 13 Elizabeth, cap. viii, 6 Edward VI is annulled and 37 Henry VIII reënacted, but, "forasmuch as all Usurie, being forbydden by the Lawe of God is synne and detestable," it ordains that even interest at ten per cent or under is forfeitable. In case of interest above ten per cent the penalty of 37 Henry VIII remains, that of thrice the principle. In both this act and the next following, 21 Jac. I. cap. xvii, which introduces further modifications, it is expressly provided that all offenders shall "also be punished and corrected according to the ecclesiastical laws heretofore made against usury".

What were these? By the canons of 1603, cap. cix, it is ordained that "if any offend their Brethren, either by Adultery, Whoredom, Incest, or Drunkenness, or by Swearing, Ribbaldry, Usury, or any other Uncleanness and Wickedness of Life.... they be punished by the severity of the Laws, according to their deserts; and such notorious Offenders shall not be admitted to the holy Communion, till they be reformed."[77] And by 5 Eliz. cap. xxiii, usury is one of the crimes expressly specified in case of which, if duly charged in the writ *de excommunicato capiendo*, the writ shall have force. "Incontinency, usury, simony,

[76]"Persons", as the context shows. In these passages I cite the *Statutes of the Realm.*

[77]Gibson's *Codex Juris Ecclesiastici Anglicani* (1761), p. 964.

perjury in Ecclesiastical Court, and idolatry", is the list.[78]

Such was the law of Church and State, and it was fully supported by popular sentiment. No doctrine of the Church was ever less disputed, or less obeyed: as usual, the prejudice of the public, which borrows rather than lends, prevailed. Supported by the teaching of the Fathers,[79] on the basis of the Old Testament prohibition of usury and a mistaken interpretation of a passage in the Vulgate New Testament, but really more by the general sentiment of the ancient world, as voiced, for instance, by Plato, Plutarch, Cicero, Seneca, and, above all, Aristotle, the Catholic Church, in the decrees of twenty-eight councils and seventeen popes,[80] declared against it with almost uniformly increasing severity up to the promulgation of the bull of Benedict XIV, *Vix pervenit,* in 1745, not abrogated at the present day.[81] Lactantius called it robbery; Ambrose, as bad as murder; the theologians of the seventeenth century, a mortal sin. Dante thrusts usurers down to the seventh circle of hell, to sit, each with a pouch hanging from his neck, under the falling flames, on the baking sand, scratching like dogs bitten by fleas, or flies, or gad-flies. The ecclesiastical penalties in the Middle Ages were exclusion from communion and the rights of testation and Christian burial.[82] In England (and generally on the Continent), where by repeated enactments usury was forbidden from the time of Alfred,[83] the property of the usurer escheated at his death, as if deodand, to the king. A will he

[78]*Ibid.* p. 1058.

[79]See list in White's *Warfare of Science,* ii, p. 265-6.

[80]Lecky, *Rationalism* (N. Y. 1873), ii, p. 255.

[81]H. C. Lea, *Yale Review,* 1894, *The Ecclesiastical Treatment of Usury.*

[82]Lea, *op. cit.,* p. 374: St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa,* iv, 496. The penalties were imposed by the oecumenical Council of Vienne, 1311.

[83]*Laws of Alfred,* Camb. Ms., Introd., cap. 35—"ne niede ðu hine swa swa niedling, ne gehiene þu hine mid ðy eacan. Cf. the so-called *Leges Edwardi Confessoris,* cap. 37; etc.

could no more make than a felon or a traitor.[84] As with many another popular prejudice and superstitution, that against the Jews for instance, the Church took it up from the people and rendered it back again, doubly dear. It was the English people in Parliament assembled that enacted the statute *De Judaismo,* forbidding usury to the Jews. In 1390 the City authorities forbade the putting of gold or silver into the hands of any person to receive gain thereby, and in the same year the Commons prayed the King that the laws of London might have the force of statutes throughout the realm. Burckhardt repeats a striking story of the people of Piacenza, who, in 1478, suffering from torrential rainfall, hit upon the cause of it in the recent burial of a usurer in consecrated earth, and, as the bishop was slow to act, dug it up, dragged it about the streets, offered it to be insulted by former debtors, and at last threw it into the Po.[85] According to the medieval principle, not yet outworn, the money-lender is a blood-sucking monster, and the man who had the spending of the money, his prey.

It is before a public of like mind that Shylock gingerly avows his practices: "my well-won thrift" (the word itself seems to taste but ill) "which he calls interest." "Ein Wucherer", said, in 1542, the greatest of reformers, "ist ein Ertzdieb und Landräuber, der billich am Galgen siebenmal höher denn andere Diebe hengen solt."[86] Bacon is often cited as the first Englishman to show modern insight in treating the subject; but there is much misapprehension current as to what he has

[84]Cf. Coke, *Third Institutes,* cap. 70, where the Statute of Merton and the jurists Glanvil and Bracton, etc., are cited, Stephen, *History of the Criminal Law of England,* iii, 196f. Blackstone (ii, 499), observing that in his day the usurer was not deprived of the right of testation, expresses a doubt whether he ever was deprived; but the preceding authorities settle the matter. Manifestus usurarius est intestabilis (Fleta); usurarii omnes res, sive testatus, sive intestatus decesserit, domini regis sunt (Glanvil, lib. 7, 16; cited from Coke). So it was, too, under the Civil Law, on the Continent.

[85]*Cultur der Renaissance* (Leipzig, 1878) ii, p. 291.

[86]Luther, *op. cit.,* p. 249.

to say. In the essay on Seditions he expresses the opinion that "money is not good unless spread, and that this is brought about chiefly by suppressing, or at least keeping a straight hand upon the devouring trades of usury, engrossing", etc.[87] In the History of Henry VII he approves the laws made by Parliament against usury, which, strict Aristotelian for once, he declares to be "the bastard use of money."[88] And in his Essay on Riches he avers that though usury is "the certainest means of gain it is one of the worst: as that whereby a man doth eat his bread *in sudore vultus alieni*". Nowhere in the Essay on Usury does he sanction it, and he takes care that he should not be so understood. He looks upon it as "concessum propter duritiem cordis," and as "inevitable," as "idle to oppose." Like Calvin, who is reckoned the first to hold that usury was not forbidden by Scripture, he has no conception of the modern theory of interest as a just share due to the lender of the money in the profits of the borrower. Chief Justice Coke,[89] Doctor Roger Fenton, and Bishop Joseph Hall attained not even to this measure of enlightenment. Not before the day of Saumaise and Filmer, about the year 1640, was the modern doctrine of interest approached, and by moralists and by public opinion these were followed from afar.

But, again, tenets and doctrines matter little, except as the reflection of popular opinion. The word is a borrower, and "I question," to quote Jeremy Bentham, "whether among all the instances in which a borrower and a lender of money may have been brought together upon the stage, from the days of Thespis to the present, there ever was one in which the former was not recommended to favor, in some shape or other, either to admiration, or to love, or to pity, or to all three; and the other, the man of thrift, consigned to infamy."[90] The Eliza-

[87] *Works*, (Boston, 1860) xii, p. 128.

[88] Works, xi, p. 134.

[89] *Second Institutes*, cap. V.

[90] *Defense of Usury*, (Philadelphia, 1796) p. 93.

bethan stage is of course no exception: Professor Creizenach remarks with justice upon the prejudice of Elizabethan dramatists against the prudent citizens and in favor of the aristocrats, who idle away their time, fritter away their money, and fall in debt. Even in a court of justice at the present time the same sentiment prevails when a professional money-lender appears, and juries will always find against him, according to Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, if they have any sort of excuse for doing so. "I have known cases," he says, "where in defiance of strong evidence, and in spite of adverse summings up, persons have been acquitted of perjury, conspiracy, and the obtaining of money on false pretenses, because the prosecutor was a money-lender."[91] Shylock was both money-lender and Jew. In him are embodied two of the deepest and most widely prevalent social antipathies of two thousand years, still sanctioned, in Shakespeare's day, by the teachings of religion. What was religious in them Shakespeare probably shared, like any other easy-going churchman, but all that was popular and of the people was part and parcel of his breath and blood.

It is impossible to undertake a minute and particular refutation. To show that Shakespeare is entering a plea, Shylock has on the one hand been conceived as a good man, much abused; and on the other hand as a bad man made bad. The misconception in the first case is so gross—as Professor Schelling has said, so preposterous—that we will not linger upon it. It is the result of reading Shakespeare as if he wrote but yesterday. Shakespeare, as we have seen, takes pains with first impressions and general effects, and is careless of detail: if the detail is important it is repeated or expatiated upon. Modern poets, as Browning, Ibsen and Maeterlinck, frame characters and plots that are problems and puzzles, in which detail is everything. We are likely at first to sympathize with Helmar instead of Nora, in the *Doll's House,* and with Guido instead of Prinzivalle or the heroine, in *Monna Vanna.* If we lose a word or a look, we lose the meaning of the whole. Turning straight from

[91] *History of the Criminal Law of England,* ii, p. 195.

these to Shakespeare, we are likely to lose the meaning of the whole in our eagerness to catch every wandering word or look. Clues to the situation are found in matters such as the bits of satire in which Shylock, like Barabas, lets fling at the ways of Christians, which one might as wisely take for one's leading-strings as the gibes of Mephistopheles in Faust;[92] or such as the Christians' willingness to feast with the Jew, Launcelot's scruples against running away from him, or the Jew's opinion of Launcelot as a lazy and gluttonous fellow. It is by this process of making the big little and the little big, as in the reflection of a convex mirror, this process of reading into Shakespeare a lot of considerations of which he knew nothing, and reading out of him all his minor improbabilities and inconsistencies,[93] that Dr. Honigmann[94] and Professor Jastrow[95] arrive at the conception of Shylock as advocate and avenger,—injured by a daughter ill brought up, they say, by this Launcelot, actuated by a sense of justice, swearing his oath in a paroxysm of moral self-coercion like another William Tell, hating Antonio, not because he is a Christian, but because by lending money gratis he deprives Hebrews of the means of livelihood, and inveigling him into signing the bond that he may humble him and then by an act of generosity heaps coals of fire on his head! One wonders whether the language of Shakespeare is any longer capable of conveying thought, or is become indeed a cryptogram. The Christians feast the Jew not from respect for him, but to

[92] Shakespeare's intention is nowhere so evident as in the case of Shylock's outcry:

> O Father Abraham, what these Christians are
> Whose own hard dealings teaches them suspect
> The thoughts of others!

The satire is not bad; but the critics forget (what Shakespeare had seen to it that the audience should not forget) that this is unctuous piety, to hide "a villain's mind." It is such satire as that of the atrocious Barabas and Zariph and the devils in the mysteries.

[93] See quantities of these in the appendix to Professor Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy*.

[94] *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch*, xvii, p. 200 ff.

[95] *Penn Monthly*, 1880, p. 725 f.

give Lorenzo a chance to run away with Jessica; just as Lorenzo runs away with Jessica and the ducats, not, as François Victor Hugo thinks, to satisfy his own or the dramatist's enlightened convictions on the subject of intermarriage, but, so far as the purposes of the play are concerned, to give point to Shylock's revenge. Both are matters of story, of improbabilities not, in modern fashion, smoothed away, or, very likely, if Gosson's play were known, a matter of sources. And as for Launcelot's scruples, they, like his laziness and gluttony, are a joke, as in Shylock's sneer at[96] "these Christian husbands," Bassanio and Gratiano, who, in the presence of their newly wedded wives, as only the audience is aware, vow, in the fervor of friendship, that to save their friend they would sacrifice their wives and all. "Censure of profane swaggering about the purest sentiments," observes Professor Jastrow, severely.

Those who will have it that Shylock, though bad, was made so, do violence to Shakespeare in two different quarters. In the first place, they have recourse to an all-pervading irony. Antonio, gentlest and humblest of Shakespeare's heroes, kicking and spitting at Jews and thrusting salvation down their throats,—such, they say, is the spectacle of race-hatred to which Shakespeare points.[97] And those others who will have it that Shylock is a noble spirit brought to shame, carry the irony still farther, into the characterization of Antonio and his friends. He, not Shylock, is the caricature![98] His virtues are but affectations and shams; his friends are debauchees, parasites, and fribbles! That is, nothing is what it seems; a comedy ending in moonlight blandishments and badinage is a tragedy, and the play written for the customers of the Globe flies over their

[96] *M. V.* iv, 1, 205-7.

[97] C. A. Brown; Sir Theodore Martin; J. W. Hales, *English Historical Review* ix, p. 656; Frederick Hawkins, *Theatre*, Nov. 1879, p. 194 (quoted by Furness):—"In availing himself of the greatest popular madness of the time, he sought to appease it." I sympathize with Mr. W. H. Hudson's impatience with the theory—"perilously near to talking downright nonsense." (*op. cit.* p. xxxviii.)

[98] Jastrow, *op. cit.*, p. 737.

honest heads to the heights of nineteenth-century transcendentalism! Irony is surely unthinkable unless the author intends it, and here not the slightest trace of such an intention appears. Moreover, a play of Shakespeare's is self-contained; the irony is within it, so to speak, not underneath it. There is irony in the appearance of Banquo at the moment when Macbeth presumes hypocritically to wish for his presence at the feast, or, more obviously still, in the fulfillment of the Witches' riddling oracles, but there is no irony such as Mr. Yeats discovers in the success of Henry V and the failure of Richard II.[99] Shakespeare does not dream that to fail and be a Richard is better than to succeed and be a Henry—or an Antonio. He knows not the ways of modern idealism, which sets the judgment of the world aside, nor the ways of modern artistic expression, which withholds the purport of the higher judgment from the world. No abysmal irony undermines his hard sense and straightforward meaning. Shylock is indeed condemned: Sir Henry Irving took no counsel of the poet when he made his exit from the ducal palace in pathetic triumph.

In the second place, they do violence to Shakespeare in representing Shylock as the product of his environment.[100] The thoughts of men had not begun to run in those channels; the ancient rigors of retribution held fast; men still believed in heaven and hell, in villains and heroes. Though in him there is little of George Eliot's moral rigor, as brought to bear on Tito Melema, for instance, Mr. Yeats errs, I think, in his opinion that Shakespeare's plays are, like all great literature, "written in the spirit of the Forgiveness of Sin." Macbeth is not forgiven, nor is Othello. Richard III and Iago were damned even in the making. And though the shortcomings of Falstaff, Bardolph, Pistol, and Nym serve a while as food for mirth, Shakespeare is in full accord with Henry V as he casts his fellows out of his company and out of his mind, to meet their end in the brothel or on the gallows. Except in comedy, he has not the

[99] *Ideas of Good and Evil*, Essay entitled "At Stratford on Avon."

[100] Mr. Hudson also remarks upon this, *op. cit.*, p. xxxvii.

spirit of forgiveness which, like Uncle Toby's for the Devil, comes of mere kindness of heart; and neither in comedy nor in tragedy has he the forgiveness of our psychological and social drama and novel, where villains and heroes are no more, which comes of fulness of knowledge. Thus he deals with poverty, the hard-handed, greasy, foul-smelling, ignorant and ungrateful multitude for which he so often utters his aversion; and thus he deals with the kindred subject of heredity. If a scoundrel is a bastard, or is of mean birth, the fact is not viewed as an extenuating circumstance, but is turned to a reproach. It may in a sense explain his depravity, but never explain it away. It sets the seal upon it. It confirms the prejudice that there is a difference between noble blood and that of low degree. So, though our hearts are softened by Shylock's recital of the indignities he has suffered, the hearts of the Elizabethans, by a simpler way of thinking, are hardened. It confirms the prejudice that there is a difference between Christian and Jew. The Fathers, Protestant theologians like Luther, seventeenth-century lawyers like Coke and Prynne, review the pitiful story of the Jews in Europe grimly, with at best a momentary and furtive pathos.[101] It proves their notion of the curse. What else, in an age when it was the universal belief that Jew and Gentile alike took upon their heads the curse of Adam's sin on issuing from the mother's womb? Even today a man who is abused in the street is supposed, by bystanders, to deserve it; the world barks at rags and poverty like the dogs; and every one knows that there are certain scars—as of branding—which a wise man does not exhibit or complain of. And how much more in the days of literary and theological bludgeoning; when the reformers were to the common enemy, and to one another, dogs, hogs, and asses; when Shakespeare himself let one of his noblest

[101] In his *Short Demurrer* Prynne tells at length the story of their sufferings, seldom with an epithet of commiseration, frequently in terms of reproach. Coke, in his comment on the Statute De Judaismo, tells the tale of the outrage committed in 1290 at the mouth of the Thames not without tokens of satisfaction at the "divine ultion."

characters cast it up to another that he possessed but one trunk of clothes; when Milton was reviled, in scholarly Latin, for his blindness and (in defiance of fact) for his guttering eyelids; and when Dryden never heard the last of the beating he got at the instigation of a fellow poet in a London street. For everything there is some one to blame, is the point of view, and who so much as he who has the worst of it?

And every loss the men of Jebus bore,
They still were thought God's enemies the more!

Such is the logic of Luther as he puts to the Jew the crushing question (naively exhorting Christians, if they must speak to Jews at all, to do likewise, and "not to quarrel with them"): "Hear'st thou, Jew, dost thou know that Jerusalem, your temple, and your priesthood have been destroyed now over fourteen hundred and sixty years?"[102] Even at the end of the seventeenth century Robert South, as he considers the universal detestation in which, through the ages, Jews have been held, must conclude that there is "some peculiar vileness essentially fixed in the genius of this people."[103] It does not occur to him that there is no one to blame, and that the cause of the detestation lies in race-hatred, the incompatibility of temperament and customs. "What's his reason?" cries Shylock. It is the reason which Antonio—that is, Shakespeare—is not analytical enough to recognize or cynical enough to avow. Steadily the Jewishness of Shylock is kept before us; like Barabas, he loses his name in his nationality—"the Jew," "the dog Jew," "the villain Jew," "his Jewish heart;"—and it is not merely according to the measure of his villainy that at the end and throughout the play he suffers. Shakespeare himself would have said, with Robert South, that the reason was his "essential Jewish *vileness;*" but we, who in the light of modern psychology and the history of society are aware that no man and no age can render adequately the reason why they themselves do anything, recog-

[102] *Op. cit*, p. 208.

[103] *Sermons* (London, 1865) ii, p. 228.

nize that the famous reason given by Shylock himself, in the heat of his *ex parte* pleading with which Shakespeare so little sympathizes, curiously enough hits the mark.[104]

With this conventionality in mind we may approach the final question, whether villain and butt as Shylock is, he may not also be, as Professor Schelling thinks, a pathetic creation. Mr. Schelling speaks of Shylock as "semi-humorous,"[105] a character in whom there is a grotesqueness bordering on laughter and a pathos bordering on tears.[106] The union of butt and villain is, as we have seen, common in Shakespeare's day, and it is as old as the stupid devils of the miracle-plays; and the union of villain and droll goes back to the cleverer devils, those of Dante, too, and medieval painting, and underlies the characterization of most of the villains—Aaron and Iago, for instance—in Shakespearean and Elizabethan drama. But villain, butt, and pathetic figure, all in one, is a thing hard to conceive. Drollery or ludicrousness and pathos coalesce, then as now, in Ibsen's Ulric Brendel or in Shakespeare's Mercutio and his clowns; but derision mingling with pathos would be like water poured into the fire. Round Shylock's words about Leah and the turquoise the question centers.

Tubal: One of them showed me a ring that he had of your daughter for a monkey

Shylock: Out upon her. Thou torturest me, Tubal. It was my turquoise; I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor. I would not have given it for a wilderness of monkeys.

This, most critics assert, the great historian of the drama[107] almost alone dissenting, is pathos: it is not the ducats behind the turquoise (a diamond gone, cost me two thousand ducats

[104]Yet it is no case of poetic divination or of writing for the comprehension of a later age. "I am a negro!" a victim of race-hatred will say today, with as little comprehension of the psychology of race-hatred or of Professor Summer's theory of the *mores*.

[105]*Elizabethan Drama*, i, p. 232.

[106]*Ibid*, p. 373.

[107]Creizenach, iv, pp. 279-80.

in Frankfort!) but the thought of Leah that wrings his heart. "What a fine Hebraism is implied in this expression!" cries Hazlitt. "He has so deep a veneration for his dead wife," says Hawkins, with impenetrable gravity, "that a wilderness of monkeys would not compensate for the loss of the ring she had given him in youth."[108] More Elizabethan wit running to waste! We may not be used to laughing at a man as he mourns the flight of his daughter, the memory of his wife, or the theft of his ducats; but neither are we used, any more than Salanio or the boys of Venice, to the manner of his mourning.

> I never heard a passion so confus'd,
> So strange, outrageous, and so variable.

Shylock is a puppet, and Tubal pulls the string. Now he shrieks in grief for his ducats or his daughter, now in glee at Antonio's ruin. In his rage over the trading of a turquoise for a monkey, he blurts out, true to his instinct for a bargain, "not for a wilderness of monkeys," and the Elizabethan audience, as well as some few readers today, have the heart—or the want of it—to think the valuation funny. The rest may find it hard to laugh at that, as, in the opinion of Rousseau, Taine, Mantzius, and many another candid spirit, it is nowadays hard to laugh at the plight of Moliere's Alceste, Georges Dandin or Arnolphe, or, to come nearer home, as it is hard to laugh at the torments of Malvolio; but in all these instances the invitation to hilarity is plain and clear. It is too late in the day to modernize and transmogrify Molière; but in lands where Shylock's love for Leah moves men to tears, Mr. Sothern may presume as Professor Baker has noted to elicit sympathy for the "affection'd ass," pleading in his madman's chains to be set free. The mistake of the critics in the present case, however, is in part that of viewing the text piece by piece and not as a whole. Torn from the context, there are phrases, even sentences, that may, indeed, seem pathetic. But Shakespeare plays the familiar dramatic trick of taking the audience in for a moment—of

[108] Quoted by Furness, p. 433. Cf. Jastrow, *op. cit.*, p. 733, for a like interpretation.

clapping upon a seemingly pathetic sentiment a cynical, selfish, or simply incongruous one. Shylock cannot wish that his daughter were dead at his foot (if that be pathos) without, while he is at it, wishing that the jewels were in her ear, the ducats in her coffin;[109] he cannot think of Launcelot's kindness, as he parts with him, without also thinking of his appetite; and when he hears of his turquoise traded off for a monkey, thoughts of Leah, his bachelorhood, and a wilderness of monkeys clatter through his brain. Here is pathos side by side with laughter, but not according to Mr. Schelling's thought. The nuances, the harmony is lacking—in true Elizabethan style, there is glaring contrast instead. The pathos is a pretense, the laughter alone is real. The laughter is not restrained, either, but would be nothing less than a roar: the grotesqueness goes over the border of laughter—perhaps of tears.

The trial scene is another place where Shylock has seemed pathetic. Almost all critics make him so, in spite of the scales and the knife-whetting and the jeers at the Jew's discomfiture. Professor Baker holds that Shakespeare evinces a sense of dramatic values in presenting Shylock's disappointment as tragic through his eyes, amusing through Gratiano's. How is the tragic value presented? By the miser and usurer's prostrate prayer to the Duke to take his life if he will take his wealth, or by his plea that he is not well? The biter bit, is the gibe cast at him at the end of *Il Pecorone;*[110] and that, exactly, is the spirit of the scene. Nor is Gratiano the only one to crow. "Thou shalt have justice, more than thou desir'st.—

[109] Professor Jastrow and Dr. Honigmann see no fun in these prompt afterthoughts, these anti-climaxes, which, if they had stood in the text of one of Robertson's plays, would have been printed each with a dash before it. "He would prefer *burying his child and his gold,*" says the former, "to knowing them to be in the possession of the Christian fools."

[110] Talche chiunque v'era presente, di questo faceva grandissima allegrezza, e ciascuno si faceva beffe di questo Giudeo, dicendo, Tale si crede uccellare ch'e uccellato. Hazlitt's *Shakespeare's Library*, Pt. ii, vol. i, p. 348.

Soft! The Jew shall have all justice—Why doth the Jew pause? Take thy forfeiture—Tarry, Jew; the law hath yet another hold on you—Art thou contented, Jew? What dost thou say?" Aimed at Shylock as he pleads and squirms, these words fall from lips which a moment before extolled the heavenly qualities of mercy! But here, as in Antonio's notion of conversion, or the Duke's notion of clemency to Jews, is the irony of history, not of art. Shakespeare's thought is as simple and sincere as is the old hagiographer's about the balancing of Jews' ledgers by royal edict. *Pacem operatur justicia.*

Professor Baker asks why "if Shakespeare wished to create laughter by Shylock, he kept him out of the fifth act, thus losing the many opportunities which his forlorn, defeated condition would have given to delight the Jew-baiters." But that would have been to make a point of the matter, and to raise the Jewish question in a play where the Jew's story is, and is meant to be, but an episode. That question, or the slavery question, which Professor Jastrow—not Shylock—raises,[111] or the sex[112] question, or any other, had for Shakespeare, or his brother playwrights, no existence. To him things were solid and settled; he was a conservative in art, as well as in life; and in his plays he held no brief, followed no program. The Jews he made ridiculous not because he himself had a grudge against them, but, just as he made London citizens, Puritans, Frenchmen, and Welshmen ridiculous, because, as he might have said, they were so. He took the world as he found it, and in no respect more than in matters of mirth.

Nor by nature was Shakespeare a satirist. Shylock is the only full-length caricature, perhaps, he ever drew, and he is rather a burlesque,—a burlesque by virtue not only of the extravagance of the portrayal but of the inadvertent indulgence

[111] P. 737: "The Jew reproaches the Christian with his sinful traffic in human flesh." Surely not; that would have spoiled Shylock's argument from analogy.

[112] Cf. my article cited on p. 264.

of it. Unlike Mr. Sidney Lee[113] (if he still holds to the view), I cannot find pathos in the remark

The patch is kind enough,

which Shylock makes as he looks after Launcelot dancing out the door, any more than I can in that about the turquoise. Our sympathies—even ours today—are engrossed and forestalled by Launcelot and Jessica, and we are not likely to concern ourselves, as Mr. Lee would have us do, about Launcelot's present deceptions and scant deservings. Any pathos, moreover, that the remark might have evoked would immediately have been swallowed up, as is the thought of Launcelot's kindliness in the miser's breast, by the words "but a huge feeder" which follow. The real significance of the remark, as of the other little touches in Shylock's character, his pride in his sober house, his memories of Leah, or the simplicity of his last words on the stage, lies in the casual quality of it—beyond the satiric scheme—a cozy individuality which Shakespeare adds almost unawares. Thus the logic of the characterization is disturbed, but the reality of it is heightened. It is thoroughly English, free-handed art, not French. Here, no doubt, lies one of the difficulties of the critics, imbued, as is all the modern world, with Gallic regularity and restraint. That at Harpagon, miser every inch of him, we are meant to laugh, there can be no question; but at Shylock, miser, usurer, and Jew we hesitate, at times, to laugh, because at those times he is something more.

So far and so far only is there any basis for the modern notion of Shylock as a sympathetic character. Yet most critics, I apprehend, will hold, as some hold already,[114] that to us he must be a man more sinned against than sinning, a hero or

[113] *Academy*, Nov. 27, 1880.

[114] See p. 1 for what Professor Wendell, a pioneer to whom we are grateful, used, at any rate, to believe; and my article on Anachronism, cited above, p. 264, last pages, where I attempt to overthrow this "two-fold truth" so far as it concerns Hamlet. The article takes up aspects of the subject which I cannot here take up again.

martyr, despite the fact that to Shakespeare he was nothing of the sort. From of old the inroads of science and history have driven men to their refuge of the "two-fold truth." It is the weakness of our minds, perhaps their safeguard. The Romans enthroned the Greek and Egyptian gods by their own. A century and a half after Copernicus, Milton, the iconoclast, ventured to make room in his great poem for the Solar System only by the side of the Ptolemaic. But truth is not twofold, for all "the higher synthesis." The question is, is the earth—the twentieth century—the hub and centre of things? Is criticism to remain as naive and arrogant as the philosophy of many a primitive people, which has it that the navel of the earth is in Delphi, the Forum, or a certain spot in Greenland, and that the name "people" belongs to them alone?[115] If for us the real and permanent meaning of the *Merchant of Venice* was reserved, then Shakespeare must have reserved it knowingly or unknowingly. That the actor and gentleman-sharer, who never published a play, should have written for the globe a burlesque part which he meant, in some milder time, to be taken for nothing short of pathetic and tragic, is an hypothesis too colossal for my mind, at least, to compass. He, of all men, surely, was no alien and stranger to his age, no "pilgrim of eternity." And as for unconscious deviation from his purpose and inadvertent relenting toward the mark of his ridicule, traces of that I have pointed out above. But why not go farther? Why is Shylock, though meant to be butt and villain, not, in spite of the poet, a hero, like Milton's Satan? But Milton's Satan, like Dante's Farinata, is not a hero—we sentimentalize and wrest the text when we make him such—and is just such an instance of unconscious sympathy, artistic rather than moral, as we have already found. And neither Milton nor Dante swerves so far, consciously or unconsciously, as to turn burlesque comedy into tragedy, or villainy into vengeance

[115] Cf. the etymology of the word Dutch or Deutsch, and similar instances of ethnocentrism in language given in Sumner, *Folkways*, p. 14.

and martyrdom? What poet could? For genius, though mysterious, is nothing mystical, and is not uplifted beyond reach of reason and common sense. It is no oracle, but the true and troubled voice of the age. It has no knowledge of the future—*sortes Homericae, Virgilianae, Biblicae,* forsooth! When will criticism have done with Apollo and his tripod, cast aside by poetry long ago? At present, the word "prescience" or "omniscience of genius" is little else than a critic's innocent method of begging the question. It lends color to the foisting into a sixteenth-century playhouse book of twentieth-century morals, ideas, and scientific facts. Why do they not find them in Beaumont or Webster, Jonson or Marlowe? Shakespeare's ways are their ways, and his thoughts their thoughts (and the ways and thoughts of many another, for that matter, before him); nor does his genius differ from theirs except in rank and degree. To hear the critics, you would think that on the twenty-third day of April, 1616, the earth yawned and the light of the sun and moon was darkened.[116]

As we have done with many another monster in history, literature, or holy writ, we have tamed and domesticated the "dog Jew", and drawn his "fangs." "He will speak soft words unto us," he no longer grins or bites. But Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, as we have seen, shuddered at him and laughed at him, and except at popular performances, where racial antipathy is rather to be allayed than fomented, so should we, as much as in us lies, today. Thus we shall come into sympathy with the manifest intention of the poet, with the acting of the part on the Elizabethan stage, with the conception of the money-lending Jew in the contemporary drama, character-writing, and ballad, and with the lively prejudices of the time. A villain and a butt, "une simple figure a gifles," as Francisque Sarcey shrewdly observes, "un monstrueux

[116]See a sensible scientific discussion of "inspiration" and the relation of the genius to his age in Joly, *Psychologie des grands hommes,* ch. v and vi. I hope to return to the subject so far as it concerns Shakespeare, before long.

grotesque, sur le nez de qui tombent à l'envi d'effroyables nasardes",[117]—such, save for a few happily irrelevant touches, and for the splendor of poetry shed, like the rain and the light of heaven, on the just and the unjust, is the impression which Shylock makes after he has been duly restored to the sixteenth century, an impression in which pathos has no place, and with which our notions of justice and social responsibility, on the one hand, or of ironical art, on the other, have, so far as they are merely modern, nothing to do. So he is not lost to us. That Hebraic and picturesque figure will be remembered long after he has retreated from the warm circle of our sentiments, and be visited again and again, by an exhilarating sally of the imagination, in the midst of the harsh and sturdy life where he belongs.

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[117] *Quarante ans de théâtre: Shylock.*